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Notes from a First-Time Bun-Mom: Driving Cross-Country with Rabbits

By Jennifer J.

Traveling cross-country with rabbits can be daunting to first-time rabbit parents. At least that was the case with us. Having read all the adoption materials when we adopted our first rabbit, Mortimer, and then again when we adopted his bonded friend, Snowball, we were beyond anxious when we started planning how to get our buns out west with us. Our biggest worry was that by day two of the trip our furry friends would get GI stasis from the constant shaking of the moving car.



Photo: Beck B.

As an anxious bun-mom, I decided to consult anyone who would listen to me and ask as many questions as possible on how to make the journey without risking the lives of our furry friends. I toyed with the idea of flying instead of driving. Everyone we spoke to about flying told us it was *possible* to fly with our furry friends, but this would be fairly tricky. Airlines used to be more rabbit friendly, but now most do not allow passengers to bring their rabbits into the cabin. Everyone we talked to and all the online articles we read agreed that rabbits safest in the cabin area of the plane, so we quickly

ruled out the option of flying. Paying for a service to transport the rabbits did not seem to be an option considering our current location and our destination. Our only viable option was to drive.

Once we decided to drive, we wanted to be as prepared as possible for the trip. We reached out to our veterinarian, who gave us the following suggestions:

- 1. Have the rabbits undergo full medical workups to make sure they are healthy.**
- 2. Prepare an emergency kit for the road in case a rabbit needs medical attention (for example, treatment for GI stasis) when far away from a veterinarian.**

3. Take a break every few hours to let the rabbits rest, eat, drink, and sleep.

We had full workups done for both of our furry friends and with the help of our vet, put together an emergency kit (see below), which contained GI stasis medication, a laminated instruction card explaining how to determine the correct dose of the medication based on a rabbit's weight, gauze, Critical Care recovery food, and feeding syringes.


Here are some of what may appear to be minor tips people gave us that ended up being a huge help:

- To help prevent the rabbits from getting motion sickness, place the rabbits in a container where they cannot see out. We used a very large Rubbermaid container, which did the trick.
- Seat belt the rabbits' container if at all possible. Even small fender-benders could be fatal to rabbits. If seat belting is not possible, wedge the container with a reclined seat or other firmly-attached objects in the car.
- Place towels at the bottom of the container to level the container floor. Car seats are usually not flat, which means that the container will not be level, making it difficult for the rabbits to stretch out comfortably.
- Place foam over the towels to minimize the rabbits' exposure to the car's vibrations.
- Last but not least, use the car's air conditioner. Rabbits overheat easily during car rides.

When the big day rolled around, we felt prepared. Our plan was to drive during the day and rest at night. In our minds, this was the best plan not only for our furry friends but also for us. Our friends suggested staying at La Quinta hotels because they are pet-friendly. We stayed at various La Quinta locations along the way. Bringing our furry friends into the hotel room each night allowed them to eat and drink, stretch out, relax, and sleep in a less stressful environment.

Our furry friends successfully made it out west from DC to San Francisco. We doubt they remember the five days on the road, especially since we added a third bun-friend to the mix. Shortly after, Mortimer and Snowball settled into their new three-story rabbit mansion, we added a third friend to the crew. Most days, the first floor of the rabbit mansion is occupied by a pile of snuggling bunnies.

CHECKLIST: (Make your own) RABBIT EMERGENCY KIT

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- ☐ **Plastic digital thermometer** (rectal temperature measurement)
 - ☐ **Ice pack** (cooling overheated rabbits)
 - ☐ **Heating pad or warm water bottle** (warming rabbits with low body temperature)
 - ☐ **Oxbow Critical Care** (emergency feeding)
 - ☐ **Pedialyte** (rehydration)
 - ☐ **Feeding syringes** 10 ml, 30 ml and 60 ml (oral administration of fluids and/or Critical Care)
 - ☐ **A can of V-8 juice, fruit juice or canned pumpkin** NOT pie filling! (for mixing with medications to increase interest)
 - ☐ **Styptic powder, cornstarch, or flour** (stopping bleeding)
 - ☐ **Mineral Oil** (lubrication of thermometers, wax removal from scent glands, alleviating skin irritation)
 - ☐ **Pediatric gas relief medication:**
 - Generic name: Simethicone; Brand names: Little Tummies, Gas-X, Phazyme, Mylicon, and Ovol.
 - For dosage info, see <http://www.morfz.com/rx/drugcalc.html>
 - ☐ **Probiotics:** Benebac or other rabbit-friendly brand (for repopulating essential gut microbes)
 - ☐ **Blunt ended scissors** or a disposable razor (for trimming hair around a wound)
 - ☐ **Sterile saline solution** (for wound flushing)
 - ☐ **Eyedroppers** (saline flushing)
 - ☐ **Towels** (for burrito-ing your bunny)
 - ☐ **Tweezers** (removal of foreign objects)
 - ☐ **Antibacterial ointment:** Medihoney or Bactriban (mupiricin)
 - DO NOT use ointments with pain relief e.g. Neosporin 'Plus'
 - ☐ **Antiseptic wash:** Betadine, chlorhexidine solution, Hibiclens, or Novalsan (wound cleaning)
 - ☐ **Sterile gauze and wound wrap** (covering and stabilizing wounds)
 - ☐ **Q-tips or tongue depressors** (application of topical ointments)